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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine (1) if black parents score at the internal or external end of the Locus of Control (LOC) scale; (2) if differences exist between black children's LOC and that of their parents; and (3) if an external-internal shift can be achieved through counseling of the parents, and if their children's LOC changes accordingly. Nowicki-Strickland Tests of Locus of Control (children and adult versions) were administered to an experimental group of low SES, black parents and children and to a similar control group. After the pre-test, the experimental parent group received six hours of counseling weekly for an eight-week period. The counseling dealt with parenting skills, behavior modification, discipline, parental responsibility for their own behavior, problem solving, communication skills, and ways that parents can build self-confidence in children. In both groups, both parents' and children's pre-test scores indicated tendencies toward externality. In the experimental group, post-test (after counseling) parent scores showed significant progress toward internal LOC, and a parallel change was noted in the children. Thus, it was concluded that children's LOC reflects their parents' LOC, and that systematized counseling programs can facilitate changes in parents and children. (GC)

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LOCUS OF CONTROL BETWEEN BLACK PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

APPLIED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between "locus of control" of Black parents and their children. The sample included thirty children and thirty parents from a low socioeconomic status area. The Nowicki-Strickland Test of Locus of Control (children and adult version) were administered in pre- and post-test to both samples. The parents received counseling for eight weeks towards improving their parenting skills to determine if improved parenting skills would affect a change in the locus of control of their children. Data were treated by a t-test to determine if significant differences existed between the groups. The first major finding was that both groups scored externally with no significant differences between pre-test scores of each group. A second finding was that significant differences (.001) were found between the pre- and post-test scores of each group. These differences appear to suggest that an effective counseling program may be used to change locus of control in parents which may give rise to changes in control ideology of children.

INTRODUCTION

Control ideology refers to how persons perceive their world, more specifically, to what extent do they control their own environment. Many people believe that by their own actions, they can have an impact on their environment and so bring about the rewards and reinforcement they desire. Many others, however, believe that what happens to them in life has little or no relation to their own actions. They do not believe that by their own ability or effort they are able to effect their own reinforcements.

The phrase "locus of control" refers to those causes to which individuals attribute their success or failure. The four major determinants or causes, perceived to affect success or failure are ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck (Heider, 1958; Weiner, et. al., 1972a). When an individual believes that by means of his own actions, he can in some way determine the reinforcements that come to him, he is said to be internally oriented with respect to locus of control. Conversely, the external person is one who does not perceive a relationship between his own actions and the rewards or punishments that are found in his life. Thus, Rotter (1966) states that "locus of control refers to the self versus environmental responsibility for an outcome," and Keller (1971) maintains that, "internal locus of control refers to the perception of positive and/or negative events as being consequential to one's own actions and thereby under personal control. External events as being unrelated to one's own behavior and therefore beyond personal control."

Persons who are "internals" will generally attribute their successes or failures to their own ability and effort. "Externals", however, will generally attribute success and failure to either luck, task difficulty, or other outside forces. For purposes of this paper, the terms internal and external will be used to refer, respectively, to those individuals who tend to attribute causality inwardly to self and to those who attribute causality externally to such determinants as luck or easiness of task.

There is a considerable body of literature which indicates that externality is a function of one's socioeconomic status (SES); and that individuals from lower socioeconomic status tend to score as externals, while individuals from middle and upper socioeconomic status generally score as internals. Lefcourt (1966), for example, suggests that lack of internality may be a by-product of poverty and racial and cultural barriers. Franklin (1963), using a national, stratified sample of 1,000 subjects, found a significant relationship between high SES and internality. Battle and Rotter (1963), using black and white sixth and eighth-grade students, found a significant social-class effect on locus of control scores (they controlled for race and I.Q.). Further, Shaw and Uhl (1971), in a study investigating the relationship between locus of control scores and school achievements, as measured by reading scores, found the lower-class blacks and whites had significantly higher external scores than upper middle-class blacks and whites. Gruen and Ottinger (1969), also found that middle-class children were more internal than lower-class children, while Jesso, et. al., (1968), found that "internal control expectancies are

positively associated with socioeconomic status" and that one's objective access to opportunities in a community is a function of perceived control.

These and numerous other studies provide strong support to the belief that locus of control is closely tied to socioeconomic status, and that individuals whose backgrounds reflect poverty and social disadvantage are almost invariably found at the external end of the locus of control continuum; that is, they believe that external forces are largely responsible for what happens to them and have great difficulty in attributing causality to themselves. When one considers what life is like among the poor, this conclusion is intuitively logical. The consequences of this external orientation are most unfortunate, however, particularly in terms of its implications for learning.

A significant amount of research has been published on LOC and counseling (Lefcourt, 1979). The general consensus of the research is that LOC can be changed via a systematical counseling program. However, there is no quantitative studies connecting LOC with parents and children. The research data decreases significantly when LOC was coupled with Black parents and their children. In view of this, it is the purpose of this study to investigate LOC between Black parents and their children. Specific interest will be focused on whether LOC can be changed in parents, and what effect it will have on their children.

PROBLEM

A significant amount of research has been published on Locus of Control and counseling. The general consensus of the research is that

PROBLEM (Cont.)

Locus of Control (LOC) can be changed via a systematical counseling program. However, there is no quantitative studies connecting LOC with parents and children. The research data decreases significantly when LOC was coupled with Black parents and their children.

PURPOSE

In view of the above problem, the purpose of this study was (1) to determine if Black parents score at the external end of the LOC scale; (2) to determine the difference between Black children's LOC and that of their parents; (3) to determine if an I-E shift can be ascertained via counseling with parents, and if there is a change in the children, as a result of parents' change. In addition, a description of LOC of parents and children will be discussed. The paucity of information becomes much more significant when Black children and parents are considered. The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a difference between the LOC ideology of Black parents and their children.

HYPOTHESES

The three major hypotheses of this study are: (1) There will not be a significant difference between parents and childrens LOC scores; (2) Parents will show a significant change in their orientation as a result of a counseling program, and (3) Children will show a significant change as a result of their parents changes in LOC.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Several terms should be defined to insure the reader's understanding of the focus of this study.

Locus of Control -- refers to those causes that individuals attribute to their success or failure

DEFINITION OF TERMS (Cont.)

Internality -- when an individual believes that by his/her own actions, they determine the reinforcement coming to them

Externality -- when an individual does not perceive his/her actions as having a relationship to their rewards or punishments

I-E Shift -- an orientation change from external LOC to internal LOC

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions have been made regarding this study: (1) The Locus of Control test provides a valid measurement in both children and parent ideology. (2) Because Black students exhibit poor academic achievement, this suggests that they will score at the external end of the LOC scale. (3) The LOC exhibited by Black parents will greatly influence their children's LOC.

LIMITATIONS

The writer views the following as limitations of this study, although there may be others. (1) The sample of both parents and children is too small to be conclusive as to the outcome of either parent or student groups. (2) All Black students do not fall into this problem group as stated in three above.

PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTING DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Test for Children was administered to the control group of children, while the Nowicki-Strickland Test for Adults was administered to a control group of parents by the counselor in the Office of Special Programs. Both groups were administered pre- and post-tests. However, the experimental parent group received counseling between the pre- and post-tests. The subjects for this study consisted of thirty children and thirty parents

PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTING DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS (Cont.)

(mothers). The thirty children were chosen from a predominately Black elementary school, located in a low SES of Southern California. Specific controls were used to equalize the sample by sex. Specifically, the criteria for selecting the control group was by a random sample from a pool of two third and two fourth grade classes.

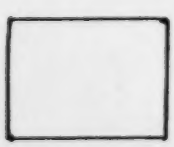
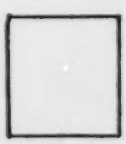
DATA ANALYSIS

These data were treated via the use of two tailed t-test to determine if significant differences existed between both groups and between the pre- and post-test. The .01 level of confidence is considered acceptable for all hypothesis in this study.

The experimental sample of parents were divided into two groups, and received six hours of counseling weekly for an eight-week period, in parenting, by the Counselor from the Office of Special Programs. The goals of the counseling group were to: (A) teach parenting skills, (B) teach parents how to cope with their children's behavior, (C) teach behavior modification techniques, (D) teach parents effective methods of discipline, (E) teach parents how to become more responsible for their own behavior, (F) teach problem solving techniques through natural and logical consequences, (G) teach effective communication skills, and (H) teach parents to build self-confidence in children.

The treatment design for this study was as follows:

GROUP I

Tested	Treated by Counseling	Difference
Pre-Test	Counseling	Post-Test
		

DATA ANALYSIS (Cont.)

GROUP II

Tested	No Treatment	Difference
Pre-Test		Post-Test

DATA ANALYSIS

These data were analyzed (1) to determine if both groups scores are similar on the pre-test; (2) to determine if a change emerged as a result of counseling in the parent group and; (3) to determine the level of significance between pre- and post-test scores of both groups. The .01 level was considered as a level of confidence, because of the smallness of the sample.

RESULTS

The data showed that both samples selected in this study demonstrated a strong tendency toward externality. Table 1 shows that parents were more external (19.1 to 18.63) than their children. Furthermore, the results show that no significant difference was evidenced between parents and their children's results in the pre-test. Thus the data provides support for hypotheses one, which stated that there will be no significant difference between parents and their children's LOC scores.

RESULTS (Cont)

TABLE 1

The Parents and Children Pre-Test Mean, Standard Deviation and Level of Significance

Parents	Mean	Standard Deviation
N = 30	19.1	4.07
Children		
N = 30	18.63	3.67

t-value = 1.280967446

Degrees of Freedom 29

Not significant

Table 2 provides the post-test results on the experimental and control group. Again, the data showed that parents were more external than their children (16.23 to 16.00). Table 2 also shows that significant differences were shown between both groups pre- and post-test scores at the significant level (.001). Therefore, Table 2 data supports hypothesis two which states that parents will show a significant change in their orientation resulting from a counseling program.

TABLE 2

The Parents Post-Test Means, Standard Deviation and Level of Significance

MEAN		STANDARD DEVIATION	
Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
19.1	16.00	4.01	3.4

t-value = 10.30703982

Degree of Freedom 29

Significant at .001 level

RESULTS/TABLE 2 (Cont.)

The Children Post-Test Mean, Standard Deviation and Level of Significance

MEAN		STANDARD DEVIATION	
Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
18.63	16.00	3.67	4.07

t-value = 6.595452979

Degree of Freedom 29

Significant at .001 level

However, when parents and children data were compared with each other on the post-test, no significant differences were found (Table 3).

TABLE 3

The Post-Test Mean and Standard Deviation of Both Groups

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Children	16.00	4.07
Parents	16.23	3.40

t-value = 0.4923922155

Degree of Freedom 29

Not Significant

The results clearly show that no differences were demonstrated between the two groups when each group's pre- and post-test scores were compared or when their post-test scores were compared with each other; although significant differences (at the .001 level) were found in their orientation when parents pre-test data was compared with the post-test results. Significant findings were also found when

RESULTS (Cont.)

children's pre- and post-test results were compared (at the .001 level), which provides support for hypothesis three. Thus, on the basis of this information all the hypothesis were supported and counseling may affect changes in both parent and children's feeling of control ideology.

DISCUSSION

The major findings that resulted from this study were that both parents and children exhibited similar feelings towards their control ideology and that systemized counseling programs can be used to facilitate changes in parents and children. The evidence also suggests that externality may be linked to child rearing practices, a finding consistent with Kagen's (1969) Study.

The finding that children and parents cognitive style were positively correlated was not a striking finding, considering this sample. This relationship was highly predictable because the sample consisted predominately of welfare recipients that come from a low socioeconomic area and that the mothers were relatively young with most of them serving as head of households. This finding becomes highly significant since the literature consistently shows Blacks score external in disproportionately fashion when compared to other ethnic groups (Lefcourt 1966). One of the major questions that these findings raise is do Blacks consistently score at the external end of the I-E Scales? It seems to this writer that the present I-E Scales are not sensitive to the black experience. It also appears that the information used to develop the I-E Scales are values consistent with middle class society. Thus, they access attributes which do not

DISCUSSION (Cont.)

reflect inherent culture differences. Furthermore, the literature seems to indicate that I-E Scales are sensitive to middle class values regardless of ethniticity (Jesso, 1968). However, when socioeconomic status was controlled, as Shaw and Uhl (1971) Study suggested, there were no differences between Blacks and Whites on I-E Scales. Thus, to predict that parents on welfare would score external was a highly predictable relationship, because of the sample's low socioeconomic status and the insensitiveness of I-E Scales to the Black experience.

Another reason why externality was predictable in this sample was because the entire population consisted of all females. The literature consistently shows that females score at the external end of the I-E Scales, when compared to males (Lefcourt, 1966). When one considers that this sample consisted of Black families, then the possibilities of this population scoring external increases significantly. Therefore, one recommendation that resulted from this study is that consentration needs to be directed toward developing an I-E Scale which is more reflective of Black life style and culture differences.

The cognitive style of children and the parents on welfare are similar. A general feeling seems to persist in both groups that luck and powerful others control their life. Both groups appear to have a feeling of inferiority; both feel that they are not in control of their life and both attribute the reason for the failure to the external. In essence, while there are strong correlations between externality among parents and children, it is a highly predictable relationship. It seems that a feeling of externality by parents may be easily perpetuated down to their children to the extent that children view themselves as external.

DISCUSSION (Cont.)

Over the past few years there has been a significant increase for teaching children responsibilities, and how to cope with their problems. In particular, Black children have been subjected to an enormous amount of counseling programs to increase their self-esteem and to make them more responsible. Although these programs produce desirable results, what seems to be lacking with these programs, to this writer, is the lack of parent involvement in helping the student make these changes. It seems clear that in order to create lasting changes both parents and children should be involved in these programs. Although the data from this study is somewhat correlational it does seem that when parents learn effective skills they can more effectively pass them along to their children. It seems clear that children are much more likely to learn these skills from their parents than they are from teachers and others. The data clearly shows that parents who show external cognitive style raise children who are external. Conversely, once parents have learned skills of coping and become responsible for their own behavior then parents are capable of teaching these skills to their children.

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